THE RED-BOUND BOOK

A Ramble Through Its Pages Will Convince the Most Prejudiced That Modern Gambling Is but a Piker's Pastime.

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Buck Whalley Plays Ball Against the Walls of Jerusalem.

"THE right hand rain-drop against the left for a thousand pounds, my Lord!"

"Done, my dear Charles."

The place was the famous gambling club known as Brooks's, the time the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and the men Lord Ossory and Mr. Charles James Fox. After dinner and before play at hazard or faro began this was a common amusement, betting on a particular drop of water on the window pane to reach the bottom before some other drop. Thousands of pounds were won and lost at this little game by some of the most eminent statesmen and highest fliers that ever lived. On one occasion, when two drops remained stationary for a long time and thus had given all the bucks in the crowd a chance to place their money on one or the other drop—when many thousands of pounds hung in the balance and the excitement was intense—the two drops finally started and when they got half-way down ran together to the intense disgust of the onlookers, and all bets were off.

THE RED LEATHER VOLUME AND ITS TALE OF PROFIT AND LOSS.

"Life is a gamble," said John W. Gates. Certainly man is a gambling animal and always will be, but it is probably true that the passion for betting and high play was greater and more universal in England in the eighteenth century than it has been since; it was surely greater among wits and statesmen. The betting book at Brooks's Club could tell many a strange tale and show many a name famous in English politics and statecraft. The book is still there, handsomely bound in red leather, with rough paper and gilt edges and makes very interesting reading—in fact, it might almost be called an historical document, for it throws a valuable sidelight on the history of the times. The first bet is recorded in 1771, and from then on, during the period of the American Revolutionary War down to 1800, the bets are very numerous and on all subjects conceivable and inconceivable. General Burgoyne, who played such an unlucky part in the war against the Colonies, figures in many of them; but the noblest gamester of them all, the top-notcher of the lot, was Charles James Fox, the brilliant Speaker of the House of Commons, and the consistent supporter of the American cause. Both in Parliament and in his wagers Fox supported the Colonies, and this support was a lucky thing for him financially, for it enabled him to recoup in a small way some of his enormous losses at cards. Here is an interesting bet entered on the club betting book:

"March 21, 1774. Almack's. Lord Clermont has given Mr. Crawford ten guineas upon the condition of receiving 500 pounds from him, whenever Mr. Charles Fox shall be worth 100,000 pounds clear of debts." Lord Clermont, of course, won. At the pace young Fox was going the winner was betting on a sure thing. Fox's father, Lord Holland, an indulgent and unwise parent, paid 140,000 pounds for Charles, but even this could not stave off the financial crash that overtook the latter in 1774. He had given notes for enormous sums to the Jews who had advanced him money on his expectations of inheriting his father's great fortune, but Fox's elder brother's wife bore a son. This put Charles down and out, and the Jews refused to wait any longer. Even after this, however, Fox's name occurs very frequently in the betting book, for on March 11, 1776, to give one instance out of many, we find: "Mr. Sheldon betts Mr. Charles Fox fifty guineas that Peace is made with America before this day two years."

Another:

"Mr. W. Hanger betts (this is the way it is generally spelled) Mr. Fox fifty guineas Mr. Fox has the gout before Mr. Hanger."

One more example of Fox's passion for play is noteworthy. At three o'clock one afternoon Fox sat down to play hazard. The game continued without a break till five the next afternoon, when Fox, as fresh and debonair as ever, repaired to the House of Commons and delivered one of the most brilliant speeches he ever made. We have modern parallels of play of even greater duration, but very few—if any—of a similar brilliant finish.

THE GENTLEMEN WHO WAGERED ON OTHER FOLKS' LIVES, THEN TOOK THEIR OWN.

The commonest subjects for bets at White's and Brooks's were deaths, births, and marriages, especially deaths. There was scarcely a prominent man upon whose life large wagers were not made. Lord Mountford laid a wager of twenty guineas with Sir John Bland that Beau Nash would outlive Colley Cibber. The bet was never settled, for both bettors blew out their brains in 1775, two years before either of the men whose lives they bet on died. A good example of this form of wager was a bet that the courts were called upon to decide during the life of the Emperor Napoleon, who was exposed to so many chances that he was considered a poor risk. An English nobleman, Sir Mark Sykes, at a dinner which he gave to some prominent persons, offered for a hundred guineas to pay one guinea per day for as long as Napoleon remained alive.

"I'll take that," said the Reverend B. Gilbert, a Church of England clergyman. "Here are your hundred guineas."

For three years the reverend gentleman collected his guinea a day—a nice little increase to his income; and when Sir John, growing tired, stopped payment, Gilbert brought suit against him to recover. Of course he lost the suit.

In 1788 there lived in Dublin a high flyer named Whalley, very popular among his fellows, gay, generous, daring; a macaroni, in fact, of the extreme type. An Irishman never does things by halves.

"Where are you going, Buck?" said one of a crowd of young fellows who happened to emerge from the Club as Whalley was passing along the street.

"To hell, if you like; to Jerusalem—anywhere."

"Bet you don't!"

"Bet I don't what? Go to Jerusalem?"

"Certainly. I'm not laying anything on your first proposition. I don't bet on a sure thing."

"All right. What's your bet?"

"I'll bet you don't go to Jerusalem—or rather that you don't walk there and back inside of a year."

"How much?"

"Five thousand pounds."

"Done. Any more want to come in?"

"Yes. Five hundred guineas." "Two thousand." "A hundred." "Six hundred."

"Odd or Even, for Fifteen Thousand Guineas!"

Whalley took all the bets up to twenty thousand pounds, and the conditions agreed upon were that he was to walk to Jerusalem and back (barring, of course, the water passages) within a year, and that he was to finish his outward journey by playing ball against the walls of the Holy City.

Whalley started on his "hike" in September and got back to Dublin and "collected" the following June. That he was not arrested in the Holy Land was due to his curious appearance and huge shillelah, for the people thought him a lunatic and let him severely alone, even when he was batting a ball up against their walls. Ever after this exploit he was known as "Jerusalem Whalley."

AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NOTION OF FIRST AID TO THE DROWNING.

The mania for betting developed an almost incredible callousness on the part of the public. Here is a thing that happened. One day the violinist Vieuxtemps was strolling along the London Bridge when "splash!" a heavy body plumped into the water. Vieuxtemps looked over the parapet in time to see a man's head emerge from the river. He was evidently a poor swimmer, and it seemed doubtful whether he could reach the shore. Instantly a chorus of yells arose from the men on the bridge and along the banks.

"A guinea he drowns."

"'Arf a crown he reaches shore."

"Two to one in ponies he don't make it."

Hardly a person there but had some wager up on the wretched victim's life, from the penny of the gamin to the "pony" of the aristocrat. No one stirred to go to the swimmer's assistance.

Finally Vieuxtemps rushed down to the water side, jumped into a boat, and ordered the boatman, who had just come out of a public house and did not know the real cause of the excitement, to pull to the aid of the now helpless man. They were at last within a few yards of the gasping and struggling swimmer, when the crowd, divining their intention, yelled:

"Let him alone!"

"Don't touch him!"

"There's a bet on."

The boatman at once stopped rowing and in spite of Vieuxtemps' pleadings made no further effort. The miserable man drowned before their eyes.

The Right Hand Raindrop Against the Left.

At the End of the First Mile Sporeogambi Was 214 Yards Ahead.

THERE WAS NOTHING SO SCRUPULOUSLY NICE AS A GAMBLER'S SENSE OF FAIRNESS.

This story seems unbelievable in these days, but it is of record, and there are other instances of the same thing. On September 1, 1850, Sir Horace Walpole wrote to Sir Horace Mann:

"They are telling a good story of something that happened at White's. A man dropped dead at the door of the club. Instantly bets were made as to whether he was really dead or not, and the bettors wouldn't let the doctors bleed him because it would affect the fairness of the bet."

Surely the world is getting better—certainly more humane.

That notorious profligate, the Earl of March, made a bet he could dispatch a message a certain distance more quickly than any horse could convey it. It was in the days when the telegraph, telephone and railway were unknown. There were many takers, for the bettors jumped at what they considered easy money.

The Earl laid his plans carefully and spent some money to win. The distance to be covered was about ten miles and at intervals along the route he posted relays of professional cricketers, hired for the purpose. Then the message, written on a small sheet of paper, was put into a cricket ball and the ball was thrown from hand to hand. The Earl won easily.

This same peer figured also in an amusing eating bet some years later, when he became the Duke of Queensberry.

"Damme, John," he said to Sir John Lade, "I know a man who can eat more than any one I ever saw."

"Your grace," answered Sir John, "I've got a champion that can beat yours, and I'll back him against your man for a thousand guineas."

"Done," said the Duke.

The contest came off in the absence of the duke, but his representative announced his grace's victory in the following bulletin:

"My lord, I have not time to state particulars, but merely to acquaint your Grace that your man beat his antagonist by an apple pie."

One of the most amusing eating contests ever decided was engaged in by an Italian, Signore Sporeogambi, who bet that he could eat more macaroni than his rival. The macaroni was served in dishes, each of which contained thirty-five yards of macaroni. At the end of the first mile—time twenty-two minutes—Sporeogambi was 214 yards ahead. He rested on his fork until his opponent came up within forty yards of him, then with a magnificent spurt of four hundred yards, in which he nearly choked to death, he won.

The famous Dean Swift was an eccentric personage, but it is hard to credit even him with this remarkable and undignified conduct. One Sunday evening the Dean was entertaining at dinner a neighboring clergyman, the Reverend Dr. Raymond. They had just finished dining when the bell of the church, two hundred yards distant, began to toll for evening service. "Raymond," said the Dean, jumping up, "I'll lay you a crown that I'll read the prayers in the church before you." "I'll take you," said Dr. Raymond, and off they started, pell-mell. Raymond, being the younger man, beat Swift in the sprint to the church door by several yards, where he paused a moment to collect himself and get a little breath. Not so the Dean. He rushed headlong past his rival, up the aisle, and without stopping to put on his robes or open the service book began to read the prayers, gasping and gurgling.

Some years ago the papers were full of accounts of enormous sums lost at Canfield's by certain wealthy men in New York society. The fact that this news made such a stir shows that such gambling is to-day rather the exception than the rule, or at least that people now have a different attitude toward it. It would have excited little comment in the days of Fox. A notorious gamester was once playing picquet with Lord Lorn. The luck had been running steadily against the former and he was several thousands of pounds a loser.

FOR QUICK ACTION IN THE GAMBLING LINE A PUNCHBOWL IS RECOMMENDED.

"A curse on such luck!" he cried. "Here, for once I'll have a bet where the chances are even."

A large punch bowl was standing on a table beside the card table, and in the course of the play had been drained to the dregs.

"Odd or even, for fifteen thousand guineas!"

"Oh! Odd," answered the peer with a yawn. The gambler dashed the bowl to the ground. "Count the pieces," he cried to an impartial bystander.

"Seventeen," was the answer after the broken bits were counted. "You win, my Lord."

The loser walked out of the club ruined. He ultimately paid, but had to sell everything he owned to do it.

Betting like this is on the wane, but it is idle for reformers to think that they

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